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ABSTRACT

This workplace skills business writing course presents the fundamentals of effective business letter writing. It focuses on logical organization, word choice, style, tone, and clarity, using students' own examples as well as practice exercises for reinforcement. Introductory material includes course description, objectives, and topical outline. The course consists of six sessions, each of which has these components: objectives, topics, methods, evaluation, materials list, teacher tips, and information sheets and handouts. Topics covered in the sessions include the following: analyzing the author's purpose, the reader, the style, and tone; prewriting--brainstorming, organizing, freewriting; writing clearly and correctly; and editing. (YLB)

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Business Writing II

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P.R.I.D.E.

PEOPLE RETRAINING for INDUSTRY EXCELLENCE

CE 070 167

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Business Writing II

Mercer County Community College
Division of Corporate and Community Programs
1200 Old Trenton Road
Trenton, NJ 08690

Elaine S. Weinberg
Director, Workplace Skills

Developed with funds from the United States Department of Education
National Workplace Literacy Program

1995

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Mercer County Community College thanks Lorna Burt, Senior Education Specialist/Curriculum Developer for creating this manual. Through her valuable contributions employees in manufacturing and service industries learned concepts relevant to their existing jobs and strategies for learning other tasks if that opportunity should arise.

WORKPLACE SKILLS TRAINING PHILOSOPHY

A factory or service center creates a classroom that is very different from the one we are used to seeing in colleges and adult schools, so it only follows that our approach to teaching in the factory should also differ.

Our goal is to teach employees skills that they need in order to be functional and successful in their work environment, and encourage them to apply those skills on the job and at home. For example, we motivate students to do the following:

- work more efficiently and more safely
- make fewer mistakes
- solve problems working interactively
- take greater responsibility for their jobs
- recognize the interconnectedness of the various jobs in their workplace
- be better communicators in the workplace

Company needs are revealed through a needs assessment. At that time, we also determine the basic skills needs of the employees. We are learner centered, as the individual employee's needs are considered alongside those of the company.

Once we have determined those needs, we develop curricula that incorporate basic skills, using the workplace literature (e.g. forms, applications, codes, abbreviations, charts and tables, handbooks, regulations, procedures, policies, memos, letters) of the company. Because each company is different, the needs and literature are also different; hence, we develop new materials for every company in which we teach. By utilizing these workplace items, we help students transfer and apply their skills directly to their jobs.

We rely on the classroom techniques of problem solving, cooperative learning, and group discussion. Our overall approach is concept based, with the emphasis on application, such as in role plays, dialogues, and group work. Despite the specific course titles, we incorporate the elements of math, English, and communication skills into all of our sessions.

In terms of students evaluation, after initial testing we give a pre-test and post-test in order to determine comprehension. Students receive feedback throughout the course from the instructor, as well as from fellow students as we sincerely believe in the powerful positive reinforcement of peer critiques and cooperative exchanges.

In essence, we believe that although we make the materials for the students with which to work, it is the students who truly make the class.

BUSINESS WRITING II

COURSE OUTLINE:

In order to communicate effectively, we need to be able to write clearly and persuasively. This course presents the fundamentals of effective business letter writing. We will focus on logical organization, word choice, style, tone and clarity, using students' own examples as well as practice exercises for reinforcement.

OBJECTIVES:

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to do the following:

- identify the reason for writing
- analyze the reader and what his response should be
- choose appropriate styles and tones
- organize ideas into the most effective order
- apply the principles of good business writing, including grammar, punctuation and mechanics
- edit first drafts
- write clear, precise letters and memos

TOPICAL OUTLINE:

- analyzing the author's purpose, the reader, the style and tone
- prewriting – brainstorming, organizing, freewriting
- writing clearly and correctly
- editing

OTHER:

- Hours: 12
- CEU: 1.2

BUSINESS WRITING II ♦ SESSION 1

OBJECTIVES:

In order to write a work related memo or letter, at the end of this session students will be able to do the following:

- assess how efficiently they write
- understand the purpose of writing a memo
- understand the principles of good writing
- know why they are writing a particular message
- analyze their reader and what his response should be

TOPICS:

- efficiency assessment
- the principles of good writing
- planning the document
  - ⇒ purpose
  - ⇒ audience
  - ⇒ bottom line

METHODS:

- guided discussion of principles
- group work
- practice situations for discussion and writing

EVALUATION:

- pre-class exercise
- correction in class and self evaluation of class exercises

BUSINESS WRITING II ♦ SESSION 1

MATERIALS:

- Efficiency assessment
- Pre-class exercise
- Principles of Good Writing
- Tips for Effective Communication
- Document Planning Sheet
- Audience and Use Profile Sheet

TEACHER TIPS ◆ SESSION 1

- Introductions

  Course overview and what we hope to achieve in the next 6 weeks.
  Efficiency Assessment helps to clarify what will be covered in the course, as well as giving students guidelines for assessing where individual problems lie.

  Pre-class exercise. Weserveyou Airlines. Get students to write about what they think is wrong with the letter. Assess on the interpretation of what the purpose is of the letter, and whether it achieves its purpose.

- Discussion – what's the purpose of writing a memo/letter?

- Discussion – first step to writing –

  1. PURPOSE:
     why am I writing this?
     what do I want my reader to do?

  2. AUDIENCE:
     who is my reader?
     what is he/she?
     what does he/she know about the subject?
     how will he/she react and use this document?
     is there anyone else who should read this?

  3. BOTTOM LINE:
     if the reader were to forget everything else, what is the one idea I want to get across?

- Use Audience-and-Use Profile Sheet and Document Planning Sheet in preparation for writing a letterwhich they will work on.and submit for evaluation, at the end of the course.

EFFICIENCY ASSESSMENT

To assess how efficiently you write, answer the following questions about the processes you use when you write memos, letters and reports.

	Always	*Often*	*Sometimes*	*Seldom*	*Never*
1. Before I begin, I ask myself what my goals are for writing the document.	A	B	C	D	E
2. I ask myself questions about who will be reading my document.	A	B	C	D	E
3. I expect to write my document perfectly immediately.	A	B	C	D	E
4. I stop and fix mistakes as I write.	A	B	C	D	E
5. Before I write I brain-storm and record my ideas on paper.	A	B	C	D	E
6. I introduce my main ideas clearly and concisely.	A	B	C	D	E
7. I give explanations and examples in the body of my document.	A	B	C	D	E
8. I try to group together all my requests for the action I want the reader to take.	A	B	C	D	E
9. I try to put as much information into as few pages as possible.	A	B	C	D	E
10. I try to make my writing/typing visibly easy to read.	A	B	C	D	E
11. I edit my work ruthlessly, cutting out from, rather than adding to my first draft.	A	B	C	D	E

ANSWERS

1. Score 5 for A, 4 for B, 3 for C, 2 for D, 1 for E
   If you don't know exactly what your purpose is for writing, you won't achieve it.

2. Score 5 for A, 4 for B, 3 for C, 2 for D, 1 for E
   Knowing your audience and being able to adjust your writing to it is one of the most important writing skills.

3. Score 1 for A, 2 for B, 3 for C, 4 for D, 5 for E
   You need the freedom to be able to get your ideas on paper. Editing and thinking of the best way of saying things comes later.

4. Score 1 for A, 2 for B, 3 for C, 4 for D, 5 for E
   Just circle/highlight problem and keep writing.

5. Score 5 for A, 4 for B, 3 for C, 2 for D, 1 for E
   Brainstorming is creative and gives you ideas on which to focus.

6. Score 5 for A, 4 for B, 3 for C, 2 for D, 1 for E
   Clear, concise writing is essential for communicating what it is you want to say.

7. Score 5 for A, 4 for B, 3 for C, 2 for D, 1 for E
   Clear, concise writing is essential for communicating what it is you want to say.

ANSWERS

8. Score 5 for A, 4 for B, 3 for C, 2 for D, 1 for E
   This is what your reader is looking for in most situations. By grouping what you want him/her to do, you this easier.

9. Score 1 for A, 2 for B, 3 for C, 4 for D, 5 for E
   It is better to give your reader two pages that are easy to read than one that is difficult.

10. Score 5 for A, 4 for B, 3 for C, 2 for D, 1 for E
    Visual impact is very important. You want to make the reader's task easy.

11. Score 5 for A, 4 for B, 3 for C, 2 for D, 1 for E
    The goals of good business writing are organization, clarity and conciseness.

If you scored between 50 and 55 you probably don't need this course. The rest of you can identify where your weaknesses lie. All these topics will be covered over the next six weeks.

WRITING TO SOLVE A PROBLEM

1. **Identify** the problem – *What?*

2. **Describe** the problem – *Who* is involved? *Where? When?*

3. **Effects** of the problem? – *How does it affect us?* Specifically?

4. **Causes** of the problem? – *What? Who? Why?*

5. **Solution** to the problem – *How to eradicate the problem.*

6. **Implementation** of the solution – *How to make the solution work.*

WESERVEYOU AIRLINES

January 15, 1993

Mr. John Smith
19 Montgomery Road
Trenton, NJ 08690

Dear Mr. Smith:

I was asked to investigate the circumstances that prompted your recent letter and respond directly to you. I apologize that your special meals continue to be a source of irritation and you are simply not receiving them as requested.

In checking your recent past date record, it appears that special meals were ordered for flights 123 and 456, but not on flight 654 as your documentation states. I believe that this problem is occurring between the transmission of the information your travel agent is putting into the computer and what we are receiving. It does not seem to be anybody's fault, but simply a computer glitch. However, I realize how frustrating and inconvenient this must be for you. I would be more than happy to speak with your travel agent regarding this issue so that he and I can come up with a solution to your problem. Please feel free to have her call me so we can figure this out together.

Mr. Smith, again, I apologize that you are having such a difficult time. This is not something that you should have to worry about and I am more than happy to solve the problem. Thank you for the opportunity to be of assistance. We, at WESERVEYOU AIRLINES, are here to serve you.

Yours truly,

PRINCIPLES OF GOOD WRITING

1. **Know why you are writing**. What do you hope to accomplish by writing? What do you want the reader to think, feel say or do as a result of reading your communication?

2. **Write the way you speak**. Though written English is usually more formal than spoken, use standard, straightforward language. Don't make anything more complicated than it needs to be. Fancy vocabulary more often than not creates problems.

3. **Write for your reader, not for yourself.** Involve your reader in your communication.

4. **Be positive** and, wherever possible, look upon situations optimistically.

5. **Be certain your writing is clear, concise, accessible, complete and accurate, correct and organized.**

TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

- Keep your writing clear, concise and simple.
- Choose your words carefully.
- Be natural.
- Avoid fad words, jargon, and clichés.
- Use the active rather than the passive voice.
- Be committed to what you say. Avoid qualifiers.
- Use familiar words.
- Be specific. Avoid vagueness.
- Eliminate redundant expressions.
- Keep your audience in mind.

DOCUMENT PLANNING SHEET

1. **Document topic:** _____

2. **Document title:** _____

3. **General goal(s):**

   To inform _____, to persuade _____, to entertain _____.

4. **Specific goal(s):** _____

   _____

5. **Approximate length:** _____

6. **Proposed format – report, letter, memo:** _____

7. **Projected completion date:** _____

8. **After reading the document, the actions I want my reader(s) to take is/are:**

   _____

   _____

   _____

AUDIENCE-AND-USE PROFILE SHEET

Audience Identity and Needs

Primary audience: _____ (name, title)

Other potential reader(s): _____

Relationship: _____ (e.g. client, employer)

Intended use of document: _____
(e.g. take action, solve a problem)

Prior knowledge about this topic: _____

Additional information needed: _____

Probable questions: _____ ?

_____ ?

_____ ?

Audience's Probable Attitude and Personality

Attitude toward topic: _____ (skeptical, indifferent)

Probable objections: _____ (cost, time, none)

Probable attitude toward writer: _____
(intimidated, hostile, receptive)

Organizational climate: _____
(receptive, repressive, creative)

AUDIENCE-AND-USE PROFILE SHEET

Persons most affected by document: _____

Temperament: _____ (cautious, impatient)

Probable reaction to document:_____
(resistance, approval, anger, guilt)

Risk of alienating anyone: _____

Audience Expectations about the Document

Reason document originated: _____
(audience request, my idea)

Acceptable length: _____

Material important to this audience: _____
(interpretations, costs, conclusions)

Most useful arrangement: _____
(problem-causes-solutions)

Tone: _____ (businesslike, apologetic, enthusiastic)

Intended effect on audience: _____
(win support, change behavior)

BUSINESS WRITING II ♦ SESSION 2

OBJECTIVES:

In order to write memos and letters on work related subjects, at the end of this session students will be able to:

- choose when to use memos and when to use letters
- set out memos and letters correctly
- distinguish different tones and styles for different audiences
- identify the most important idea that the message must get across
- use transitions to make their writing read more smoothly

TOPICS:

- when to use memos and when to use letters
- memo and letter format
- style and tone
- transitions

METHODS:

- guided discussion of principles
- group work
- practice situations for discussion and writing

EVALUATION:

- self evaluation based on correct completion of worksheets

BUSINESS WRITING II ♦ SESSION 2

MATERIALS:

- Better Memo Writing
- Standard Memo Format
- A Checklist for the Business Letter
- How to Structure a Business Letter
- Transitions
- Tips for Setting out your Letter
- Style and Tone
- Memos for Discussion

TEACHER TIPS ◆ SESSION 2

- Discussion on when to use **memos** and when to use **letters**.

- **Setting out memos**:
  1. To:
  2. From:
  3. Date:
  4. Subject:
  5. no signature – most writers initial beside name

- **Setting out letters:**
  1. date line (preceded by writer's address if no letterhead used)
  2. address
  3. attention line (optional)
  4. salutation
  5. subject line (optional)
  6. message
  7. positive/complimentary closing
  8. company name (optional)
  9. author's name and title
  10. reference initials
  11. enclosure or attachment notation (when appropriate)
  12. copy notation (when appropriate)

- Discussion on **main idea/s** and **supporting details**

- **Transitions**

- **Style** and **Tone**

- **Group work** – discuss and rewrite memos on Flextime

BETTER MEMO WRITING

1. **Get to the point quickly**
   the reader already knows the purpose of the memo because of the subject line.

2. Be **interesting, conversational, natural.**

3. Highlight **key ideas**, using bullets, underlining or bold.

4. **Keep it short** – under 1 page and use short sentences, generally.

5. Write in the **order events happen**.

6. Be **specific, clear, concise** and **economical.**

7. Keep your **audience in mind.**

8. Keep it **simple.**

STANDARD MEMO FORMAT

NAME OF ORGANIZATION

TO: Name, Title

FROM: Name, Title, Initials

DATE:

SUBJECT: CLEARLY TITLED IN FULL CAPS

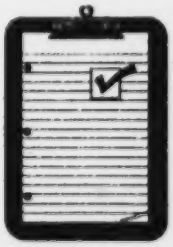
Introductory paragraph

Body paragraph

Concluding paragraph

CHECKLIST FOR THE BUSINESS LETTER

- Tell what your letter is about in the **first** paragraph
- If you are replying to a letter, refer to the date it was written
- Write the way you speak; **be natural**
- **Be specific**
- Use the **active voice** rather than the passive
- Don't ramble on; **keep the letter short**
- **Underline, bold** or **italicize key words** for emphasis
- Don't pass off opinions as facts
- In your **final** paragraph, tell your reader exactly what you want him/her to do, or what you are going to do.
- **Edit** your first draft ruthlessly
- **Proofread** thoroughly



HOW TO STRUCTURE A BUSINESS LETTER

INTRODUCTION

Opening statements

Sentence 1 – states *reason* for writing
Sentence 2 – states *1st. major* idea
Sentence 3 – states *next major* idea
Sentence 4 – states *next major* idea

Transition statement to get from **introduction** to **body**

BODY

Take **1st. major** idea – *explain, support, conclude*
Transition
Take **next major** idea – *explain, support, conclude*
Transition
Take **next major** idea – *explain, support, conclude*

Transition statement to get from **body** to **conclusion**

CONCLUSION

Summary
Closing statement

TRANSITIONS

TRANSITIONS are words or phrases that show the relationship between one statement and another or one paragraph and another. They make your writing read more smoothly.

TO EXPLAIN – for instance, for example, to illustrate, also, that is, too, namely

TO CONTRAST – however, nevertheless, yet, but, on the other hand, on the contrary, otherwise, in contrast, in spite of, instead

TO ADD – in addition, furthermore, similarly, besides, moreover, a second..., another..., again

TO SHOW REPETITION – in other words, as I have said, that is, as has been stated

TO SHOW ORDER – first, second, third, finally, in conclusion

TO SHOW RESULT – therefore, as a result, consequently, for this reason, accordingly, in conclusion

TO EMPHASIZE – in fact, indeed, in any event, naturally

TO CONCEDE A POINT – fortunately, of course, in fact, naturally

TIPS FOR SETTING OUT YOUR LETTER

When reader's reaction is positive or neutral and you aren't asking for any action –

- give good news first. Summarize main points in 1st paragraph.
- in body, give supporting details, negative aspects and benefits.
- make last paragraph personal and positive.

When you have bad news –

- open with a neutral statement.
- give the reason for the news before the bad news itself.
- be clear and concise.
- try to give an alternative or compromise.
- try to end positively.

When you want the reader to do something –

- catch the reader's interest.
- define the problem.
- explain the solution.
- show that any objections are outweighed by the benefits
- tell the reader exactly what you want him to do.

STYLE AND TONE

What you say in a memo or letter is partly **how** you say it.

Your message can get lost in your words. The whole message is more than understanding the dictionary definitions of the words you use.

Writing effectively conveys how you wish to relate to your audience and what you want your audience to feel in response.

You must choose what style is appropriate for the occasion. Should you be personal or impersonal, simple and direct or more complex and colorful, forceful or passive?

To be an effective communicator **remember:**

1. Your style has an impact on your reader
2. Style communicates almost as much as the content of a message
3. Style cannot be isolated from a situation
4. There is no general style to fit all situations

For a forceful style – appropriate where the writer has power to give orders or to say no, firmly but politely to a subordinate.

- use the active voice
- don't beat about the bush. Say it directly.
- Write most sentences in subject-verb-object order. Don't weaken sentences by relegating the action to a subordinate clause: " Mike was offered the job, although the competition was intense," not "Although Mike was offered the job, the competition was intense."
- be confident. Avoid words like possibly, maybe, perhaps, some might conclude that

For a passive style – appropriate in negative situations and where the writer is subordinate to the reader.

- avoid the imperative

STYLE AND TONE

- occasional use of the passive: "Valuable time is being wasted" instead
- of "You are wasting valuable time."
- use words like possibly, maybe, perhaps, some might conclude that

For a personal style – appropriate in good news and persuasive action/request situations.

- use the active voice
- use personal pronouns (particularly you and I) and people's names, instead of titles
- uses short sentences that give the rhythm of ordinary conversation
- direct questions to the reader
- add positive personal thoughts and references to reinforce that this is not some type of form letter, sent to lots of others

For an impersonal style – appropriate in negative and information conveying situations. (Also in technical and scientific writing)

- avoid using people's names and personal pronouns
- use the passive voice
- make some of your sentences complex and some paragraphs long.

For a colorful style – appropriate for the more persuasive writing of sales and advertising letters.

- use adjectives and adverbs
- if appropriate, use metaphors – our new product is a miracle of modern design; or similes – our new cleaner works like magic to remove stains

There can be some overlap in these styles. This is a guide to help you, but, in the end, it is up to you to decide how you say what you want to say.

MEMOS FOR DISCUSSION

Company XYZ has a policy of flextime. Below are a selection of letters written by the Manager of Human Resources telling all employees about the program. Discuss how each meets the needs of the reader and the organization. Is the message clear, complete and concise?

1.

To: All Employees
From: Manager, Human Resources
Subject: Now you can come and go when you want!

Great news! As from Monday, March 1, you get to choose your own hours! Well, not any hours, but as long as you're here from 10 to 3, the rest is up to you.
This will make life easier for you moms and dads. We all know what a pain it is trying to juggle home and work. And those without kids won't mind the extra flexibility to catch up on time in the gym. It will be good to get on the machines without having to wait.
Just work it out with your supervisor. Someone has to be around from 9 to 5. We don't want the customers thinking there's nobody here when they phone! Enjoy!

2.

To: All Employees
From: Manager, Human Resources
Subject: Flextime

Following the Executive Board meeting on February 3, 1993, in accordance with company policy regarding changes to procedures, it is announced that from Monday, March 1, 1993, Company XYZ will be initiating a system of flextime. Attendance between the hours of 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. will be regarded as obligatory. However employees will have the option of choosing their own hours of commencement and departure, subject to their supervisor's approval and providing they are present for the mandatory eight hours. The other stipulation is that personnel are present at all times in order to facilitate the answering of telephones.

MEMOS FOR DISCUSSION

3.

To: All Employees
From: Manager, Human Resources
Subject: Another Employee Benefit for Employees who work here at Company XYZ.

Some of you may already have got wind of the new policy that we are about to initiate at XYZ. We are really excited about it and know that once you get used to the new system, you too will be as enthusiastic as we are. However there are some organizational details that you need to be aware of.

Things will get under way on March 1, 1993. At that time you will be able to be more flexible about you start and finish times. You have to be at work between the core hours of 10 a.m.and 3 p.m. and then have to put in the extra 3 hours to make the 8 hour work day. This means that, for example, you could come in at 6 a.m. and then leave by 3 p.m. Or, if you wanted to come in at 9.30 a.m. it would mean that you could only leave at 5.30 p.m. You will be able to work out whatever suits you best. You can even come in at different times on different days, so long as you have your supervisor's permission.

As I have just said, you do need to get your supervisor's permission. This is obvious, because otherwise it might mean that on some days and at some times, there might not be anybody to answer the telephones. You all know that customers are the lifeblood of our company, so we must have somebody here at all times.

I do see that there might be a few problems with this to start out, but I am confident that we can work it out. I hope that you think that this is a good idea and that it gives you more time to spend with your families or catching up with those things that we never get time to do in a normal work week.

Now **rewrite** this memo.

BUSINESS WRITING II ♦ SESSION 3

OBJECTIVES:

In order to write effective memos and letters, at the end of this session students will be able to:

- brainstorm
- organize their ideas into the most effective order
- freewrite
- write a first draft

TOPICS:

- brainstorming
- organizing ideas
- freewriting
- writing a first draft

METHODS:

- guided discussion of principles
- group work applying principles
- writing

EVALUATION:

- self evaluation of first draft

MATERIALS:

- The Brainstorm Outline

TEACHER TIPS ◆ SESSION 3

Discussion on **brainstorming** – tends to be useful for **longer** memos, letters and reports.

1. Regular jotting down of ideas
2. Picture Outline
    - nonlinear, pictorial way of getting ideas and their relationship
    - to each other on paper
    - encourages free association of ideas
    - space to squeeze in new ideas
    - visual grouping of ideas
    - put related ideas on same spoke or close to it
    - less important facts stem out of more important ones

Brainstorm using both methods (either 2 of 3 original memos or new ones)

Organizing ideas:

- what order will be most effective?
- can any details be combined?
- look at what general topics emerge
- will these be separate headings/paragraphs?

Freewriting:

- write from beginning to end. If a good beginning doesn't emerge, go onto next idea.
- let your thoughts flow. Don't worry about mechanics. That comes with editing.
- change nothing as you write.

BUSINESS WRITING II ♦ SESSION 4

OBJECTIVES:

In order to write clear, well constructed letters and memos, at the end of this session, students will be able to do the following:

- edit for visual impact
- simplify complicated sentences
- remove cliches, redundancies and obsolete expressions
- avoid ambiguities
- use the active rather than the passive voice

TOPICS:

- basic rules for editing: trimming unnecessary words, simplifying language, removing cliches, redundancies, ambiguities, and obsolete expressions

METHODS:

- guided discussion of principles
- worksheets of examples
- application of the above to own first drafts

EVALUATION:

- comparison of first to second drafts
- successful completion of worksheets

BUSINESS WRITING II ♦ SESSION 4

MATERIALS:

- Three Steps to Editing
- The Importance of Visual Impact
- Editing: What to look for
- Simplifying Prepositional Phrases
- Simplifying Phrases
- Sentences to Simplify
- Outdated Business Language
- Redundancies
- Being Tactful and Positive
- Eliminating Redundancies
- Making Passive Sentences Active

✍ TEACHER TIPS ◆ SESSION 4 & 5

- The purpose of these two sessions is for students to edit their five memos that they have been working on throughout the course. These will be submitted in session #6.

- Students are introduced to the rules of editing, using company and class generated materials. The handouts are for back-up and for the students to use later.

- The handouts are supplemented by worksheets to edit.

- Then students look at their own writing. Encourage them to be critical of their first drafts and to edit ruthlessly. This is a good time for the instructor to spend time with individual students and their specific writing problems.

THREE STEPS TO EDITING

In order to simplify the task of editing, we suggest you divide it up into three separate sections.

1. **Looking at the whole picture** – the overall content and organization of your work. Skim through your document. Does it look easy to read? If it looks hard to read, it is hard to read and may not get read at all!

2. **Editing what you have written.** Read for clarity, conciseness and simplicity. Can you leave out phrases or sentences that might confuse your reader? Can you simplify what is left? The sections that follow go into this editing in detail.

3. **Grammar, spelling and punctuation.**

THE IMPORTANCE OF VISUAL IMPACT

USE:

- **Short paragraphs**

  Paragraphs have **three** purposes:
  ⇒ to develop the single idea presented in the topic sentence or subject line
  ⇒ to provide a logical break in material
  ⇒ to create physical breaks that help the reader visually

  Paragraphs should be short – 5-6 lines.

- **Headlines**

  Headlines focus your reader on major ideas

- **Highlighting**

  Use bold, italics, capitals to focus your reader on important information

- **Bullets**

  For impact, use bullets to replace lists within sentences

EDITING: WHAT TO LOOK FOR

Lengthy Sentences

In arranging for the customer to finance his car, Chrysler dealers were at a disadvantage when competing with General Motors and Ford dealers because both these companies offered direct auto financing to dealers and customers through their own financing sources and Chrysler dealers had to look to outside sources to satisfy their financing requirements.

Clichés

Enclosed please find the information as per your request. Hopefully, you can utilize our product to benefit your company within the parameters of your computer's invoice processing. We appreciate your input.

Too Many Big Words

Pursuant to our discussion, herewith we acknowledge receipt of your correspondence as of the above date.

Subsequently, we'll require your endorsement.

Vague Expressions

The company's negative cash flow position forced it to resize its operations to the level of profitable market opportunities.

Active vs. Passive Voice

It was necessary to terminate the search

The secretary was hired by Mary.

The Ford corporation was founded by Henry Ford in 1903

New and used automobiles are financed by G.M.A.C.

SIMPLIFYING PREPOSITIONAL PHRASES

ORIGINAL	REVISED
at all times	always
at a later date	later
at an early date	soon
at the present time	now
at the time when	when
at this time	now
in the amount of $10.00	for $10.00
in the development of	in developing
in the event that	if
in the meantime	meanwhile
in the nature of	like
in the near future	soon
in view of the fact that	because
for the collection of	to collect
for making the comparisons	to compare
for the learning of	to learn
for the mastery of	to master
for the month of July	for July
for the operation of	to operate
for the purchasing of	to buy
for the preparation of	to prepare
for the purpose of reviewing	to review
for the operation of	to operate
for the reason that	because
for this to be accomplished	to do this
along the lines of	like
of this nature	like this
on the grounds that	because
on the part of	by
over the signature of	signed by
to the attainment of	to get
through the use of	by using
under the direction of	directed by
under separate cover	separately

SIMPLIFYING PREPOSITIONAL PHRASES

UNNECESSARY WORDS

are as follows	are
aware of the fact that	aware of
if it is deemed to be satisfactory	if satisfactory
in order to be well-prepared	to be well-prepared
in the course of his speech	in his speech
in the month of July	in July
in the year 1993	in 1993
it is interesting	(leave it out)
it is obvious that	(leave it out)
it is possible to do this	we can do this
until such time as	until
we are in the process of preparing	we are preparing
we are in the process of restructuring	we are restructuring
we wish to advise	(leave it out)
we find it objectionable	we object
we came to the conclusion that	we concluded that

SIMPLIFYING PHRASES

Simplify the phrases below. Eliminate any wordiness, jargon, obsolete expressions or incorrectly used words.

at this point in time _____

as per your suggestion _____

I would like to call your attention _____

in the event of _____

due to the fact that _____

at a later date _____

kindly advise _____

in the normal course of our procedures _____

this will acknowledge with thanks _____

in accordance with your request _____

under separate cover _____

on a daily basis _____

each and every one _____

in my opinion, I think _____

irregardless _____

owing to the fact that _____

we regret to inform you _____

therefore, we ask you to remit _____

there is no doubt but that _____

so very happy _____

clenched tightly _____

close proximity _____

close scrutiny _____

in the majority of instances _____

at this juncture of maturation _____

in the amount of _____

SENTENCES TO SIMPLIFY

Rewrite the following sentences so that they are simpler and more concise.

1. Pursuant to our meeting last week, the undersigned requests the opinion of your workteam concerning the feasibility of the proposed guidelines.

2. In the event of an unexpected accident and you are a witness who saw the accident, you should file a completed accident report with the office of the safety director.

3. They would not divulge the reason that their equipment was in a non-operative condition.

4. We must interface with the Personnel Department as to the availability of the training facility in order to assemble for our class.

5. Enclosed you will find various selections from literature about chemical contaminants to assist engineering personnel who are in the process of preparing documentation on the inherent problems at the aforementioned site.

OUTDATED BUSINESS LANGUAGE

Good business writing requires flexibility and a willingness to change. Many obsolete phrases and overused expressions are no longer appropriate and make your writing dull and expressionless.

Examples:

comply with your request
permit us to remind you
pleasure of a reply
regret to advise you
thanking you kindly
we take pleasure in advising
subsequent to your letter of
as per our agreement
as per your request
enclosed please find
under separate cover
until such time
prior to the start of
regarding the matter of
in the near future
pursuant to
hereby advise
please be advised
in the matter that
please remit

REDUNDANCIES

Redundancies are unnecessary repetitions of words. Writing should be concise and to the point.

Examples:

exact same
past history
past experience
free gift
personal opinion
true fact
other alternative
return back
basic fundamental
both alike
cooperate together
revert back
Jewish rabbi
Catholic priest
meet together

goals and objectives
fair and just
advised and informed
rules and regulations
full and complete
prompt and immediate
each and every
right and proper
continuous and uninterrupted
refuse and decline
modern and up-to-date

Avoid these phrases:

As a general rule
In my opinion, I believe that
In my personal opinion
Enclosed you will find

ELIMINATING REDUNDANCIES

Rewrite the sentences below, eliminating the unnecessary words.

1. In my opinion, I personally like working together with other people.

2. Joint cooperation is absolutely essential for the mutual benefit of everyone.

3. The working environment at ABC Company is very unique in the Princeton area.

4. As a general rule, my supervisor arrives at 9.00 a.m., each and every day.

5. Please remit your complete and full report by Monday, so that if it doesn't meet our goals and objectives, you can continue on and revise it before the meeting. The other alternative is for us to meet together to revise it together.

6. An extremely higher concentration of sodium and chloride concentrations might in all probability be considered a clear indication of surface water impact on groundwater quality.

MAKING PASSIVE SENTENCES ACTIVE

Overusing the passive voice makes you sound ineffectual, and unwilling to take a stand. Instead, use the active voice to sound more positive and capable of getting the job done.

Example:

We have received your letter *or* Thank you for your letter
rather than
Receipt of your letter is acknowledged

Rewrite the sentences below using the active voice.

1. The client was notified by the consultant that the meeting would take place the following Thursday.

2. Suggestions and comments about my ideas can be given without hurting my feelings.

3. It was stated in the nurse's report that fewer accidents were suffered by employees this year than in the previous three years.

4. It is advised that accurate minutes of all departmental meetings be kept and reports submitted by departments at the end of every month.

5. Influences from other sources will be demonstrated if significant differences are to be found.

6. Clients are being put on hold for extended periods while you are being located by us.

BUSINESS WRITING II ♦ SESSION 5

OBJECTIVES:

In order to write correct, well constructed letters and memos, at the end of this session, students will be able to do the following:

- apply spelling rules
- use frequently confused words correctly
- punctuate correctly

TOPICS:

- Spelling Rules
- Spelling Exercises
- Frequently Confused Words
- Punctuation

METHODS:

- guided discussion of principles
- worksheets of examples
- application of the above to own first drafts

EVALUATION:

- comparison of first to second drafts
- successful completion of worksheets

BUSINESS WRITING II ♦ SESSION 5

MATERIALS:

- Spelling Review
- Commonly Misspelled Words
- Spelling Rules
- Frequently Confused Words
- Commas
- Run-Ons
- Commas and Semicolons
- Colons
- Apostrophes
- Other Punctuation Marks
- Punctuation Exercises

SPELLING REVIEW

Complete the word in parentheses.

1. We hope to (**rec _____ ve**) payment for the work by the end of the week.

2. We avoided an (**arg _____ ment**) when we held a meeting to change our working (**env _____ ment**).

3. The hinges on the door are (**l _____se**) and need to be tightened.

4. I did not (**bel _____ ve**) the (**h_____ ght**) of the new basketball player.

5. In my (**jud _____ ment**) the (**go _____ ent**) will spend more on training next year.

6. I will send that letter (**sep _____ ly**) and would appreciate your answer (**im _____ d _____ ly**).

COMMONLY MISSPELLED WORDS

absenCE
aCCept
aCComplish
aCCurate
achIEvement
acquaintANCE
aCRoss
adverTISEment
adVICE/VISE
A LOT
anSWer
aPPropriate
arGUMent
artICLE
aTHLete
attenDANCE
availABLE
bEAUtiful
begiNNing
behaVIOR
breaTH/THE
BUSIness
calENDAR
cEIling
cerTAINly
chIEf
choiCe
chOOse/chOse
coMMerCial
coMMiTTEE
compETItion
conCentrate
congRATulate
conSCIENCE
conSCIOUS
consEquently
convenIEnce
counSelor
critiCISM/CIZE
deFINITEly
desPERate/ly
DEScribe
deveLOP
diFFERent/ence
diSAPPoint
DISease
doESN'T
duRing
eiGHTH
embaRRaSS
enTRANCE
enveLOPE
enviRONMent
eSPECIALly
exaGGerate
eXCept
exisTENCE
exPERIEnce
exPERIment
exPLANation
exTREMEly
familIAR
faSCinate
FeBRUAry
forEIGN
genIUS
goVERNMent
gramMAR
gUArANtee
hEIGHT
iMMediate
imporTANT
indepenDENCE
inTEGration
inTELLectual
intERest/ing
inTERfere
inteRRupt
IRRELevant
JUDGment
JEWELry
knowLEDGE
laBORATory
LEIsure
lenGTH
liCenSe
lonEliness
lOOse/lOse
mainTENance
maTHEmatics
misCHIEF
miSSpell
nIEce
ninEty
ninTH
oCCaSion
oCCuRRence
opINion
oPPortunity
oRIGinal
oPTImist
partiCULAR
PAStime
PERform
PERhaps
phoNY
phySICal
poSSeSS
poSSible
preFER
preJUDiCED
preVALENT
priviLEGE
proBABly
proNUNciation
PSYchology
PURsue
quIET/quITE
realIZE
reCOMMend
RHyTHM
rIdicULOUS
scenERy
SCHedule
SECRETary
sePARate/ly
siMILar
siNCe
sinCEREly
spEEch
straiGHT
strenGTH
sUCCeed/sUCCess
SURpriSE
temPERature
thROUGH
thoROUGH
ThurSday
toMoRRow
unNECESSary
UNusUAlly
WedNESday

SPELLING RULES

1. **i** before **e**, except after **c**, if the sound of the 2 letters combined is **"ee"**:

   mischief receive

   i before **e** if the sound of the 2 letters combined is **"ee"**. If not, the pattern is reversed:

   foreign

   Exceptions:

   either, neither
   seize, leizure
   weird, sheik

2. If a word ends in **"y"** and the **"y"** comes after a **consonant**, change the **y** to **i** before adding more to the word:

enemy	enemies	
secretary	secretaries	
try	tries	tried
study	studies	studied
lonely	loneliness	

   But when you add **"ing"** you keep the **"y"**:

try	trying
study	studying

   If the **"y"** comes after a **vowel**, you do not change it to **"i"**:

holiday	holidays	
display	displays	displayed
employ	employment	
pay	payment	

   Exceptions:

day	daily
pay	paid
lay	laid

SPELLING RULES

3. Drop the final silent **e** when adding an ending that begins with a **vowel:**

accuse	accusing
dispute	disputing

Keep the final silent **e** when adding an ending that begins with a **consonant:**

hope	hopeless
spite	spiteful

Exceptions:

judgment	courageous
dyeing	argument
truly	

4. **Double** the final consonant, when adding an ending, when the vowel sound says its sound:

sum	summary
trim	trimming
program	programming

Usually, in words of more than one syllable, when the accent is on the **1st**. syllable, **do not double** the consonant:

layer	layering
offer	offered
cancel	canceled

Usually, in words of more than one syllable, when the accent is on the **2nd**. syllable, **double** the consonant:

occur	occurring
refer	referred
prefer	preferred
remit	remittance
omit	omitted

Do not double the final consonant, when adding an ending when the vowel sound says its own name:

time	timing
rage	raging
cope	coping

FREQUENTLY CONFUSED WORDS

Fill in the blank in each sentence by selecting the word you think most appropriate from the words in parentheses.

1. Don't let my opinion _____ your decision.
   (*effect, affect*)

2. The _____ of the new price increases will be that fewer people will be able to afford the product.
   (effect, affect)

3. It becomes a matter of _____ that we offer products at affordable prices.
   (principal, principle)

4. After working in sales for a year, she decided that she was _____ in it.
   (disinterested, uninterested)

5. Let me _____ an example to illustrate the point.
   (cite, site, sight)

6. The _____ is an important part of this program.
   (*councilor, counselor)*

7. Do you mean to _____ that I am not telling the truth?
   (*infer, imply)*

8. From what you have said, I have reason to _____ it.
   (infer, imply)

FREQUENTLY CONFUSED WORDS

9. Nothing that happened after the meeting could _____ from the initial excitement we all felt.
(detract, distract)

10. He received many _____ for the presentation he gave on the importance of good customer relations.
(complements, compliments)

11. When we arrived, the others were _____ to go.
(all ready, already)

12. I make _____ mistakes in punctuation than I did before I took this course.
(less, fewer)

13. In order to relax, you must _____ deeply.
(breath, breathe)

14. The new rule, _____ antagonizing the employees, will be difficult to administer.
(beside, besides)

15. Writing letters is another good _____ of communication for this purpose.
(median, medium)

COMMAS

1. Use a **comma** in a **compound** sentence between the **2 independent clauses** and before the **conjunction** unless it obstructs the flow.

   IC, for IC.
   IC, but IC.

   Examples:
   He asked for a promotion, but he got a demotion.
   She had to go to the warehouse, so she left early.

2. Use commas around **removable information**.

   Examples:
   The house, made of wood and cement, was demolished in 1988.
   The company, a turbine manufacturer, has three locations.
   Steve, who has worked for the company for 10 years, has taken his GED test.

3. Use commas to separate **items in a list.** The items can be things (nouns) or action phrases.

   Examples:
   He brought nails, screws, tacks, and a hammer.
   They take the order, call the customer, check the order, and ship the merchandise.

   NOTE: The final comma before the **"and"** is **optional**, but it depends on the **context.** If the reader could be confused without the comma, then put it in.

   Examples:
   He drinks tea, beer and milk.
   The afternoon garbage man will drive the truck, make the stops, eat and pick up the garbage.
   This being my last will and testament, I am leaving my estate to be divided among my sons: Bill, George and Steve.

FREQUENTLY CONFUSED WORDS

4. Use a comma between a **subordinate** clause and a **main** clause.
SC , MC.

Examples:
Even though it was 110 degrees, he was wearing a sweater.
Since they lost the key to the room, they had to break down the door.

NOTE: If you put the MC first, you don't need a comma.
MC , SC

Example:
They had to break down the door since they lost their key.

5. Use a comma to set of a **direct quote.**

Examples:
He said, "The meeting will be at noon."
They asked, "Where is the meeting being held?"

NOTE: In reported speech, omit the comma.

Examples:
He said the meeting would be at noon.
They asked where the meeting was being held.

6. Use commas between **adjectives** of **equal importance.**

Examples:
She is a wise, witty woman.
The big, expensive, obnoxious American car was parked illegally.

NOTE: use a comma between adjectives when you would say "and"

Example:
The big AND expensive car is parked wrong.
But:
The expensive American car (you wouldn't say expensive AND American car)

RUN-ONS

Three ways to fix a run-on:

1. Make it into two separate sentences by adding a period and a capital letter.

2. Make it into a compound sentence by adding a coordinating conjunction (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so).

3. Make it into a complex sentence by adding a subordinating conjunction (because, when, before, while since, etc.)

Find and correct the run-ons in the sentences below, using a combination of the three methods.

1. Employees should notify the human resources department they plan to take vacation time.

2. You must tidy the library after you have been working there you must also tidy your desk at the end of the day.

3. All procedures must conform to company safety standards these are set out in the company guidelines.

4. Unhappy customers might not complain they just won't come back.

5. Most benefit books are very boring to read and difficult to understand people don't bother to read them.

6. Some people like to listen to music when they work others prefer to work in silence.

COMMAS AND SEMICOLONS

DO NOT use a comma between **two independent clauses.**
(IC, IC.). This error is known as a **comma splice,** because you are *splicing* together two ideas that could stand independently.

He was late, he came to work at 9:00.

HOW TO FIX A COMMA SPLICE?

1. Use a **period** to separate the 2 clauses.

   IC. IC.

2. Use a **comma** and a **conjunction** to separate the 2 clauses.

   IC, so IC.
   IC, for IC.
   IC, but IC.

3. Use a **semicolon** to separate the 2 clauses.

   IC; IC.

4. Use a **semicolon** and a **transition** word (followed by a comma) to separate the 2 clauses.

   IC; however, IC.
   IC; nevertheless, IC.
   IC; regardless, IC.

LONG ITEMS OR CLARIFICATIONS IN A LIST

1. Use **semicolons** between **long** or **wordy items** in a list, and **commas** between the **adjectives** and **phrases.**

Example:

There were several reasons why she hated going to the warehouse alone: the dark, damp space scared her, the extreme quiet rankled her nerves, made her skin crawl, and left her tense, and her fear of being locked in, a fear that stemmed from her childhood, froze her in her tracks.

There were several reasons why she hated going to the warehouse alone: the dark, damp space scared her; the extreme quiet rankled her nerves, made her skin crawl, and left her tense; and her fear of being locked in, a fear that stemmed from her childhood, froze her in her tracks.

2. Use **commas** between **items** and **clarifications**, then **semicolons** between the **separate items** in a list.

Example:

Many people attended the meeting: Paul Smith, President, Ken Lewis, Vice President, Stan Heim, Marketing Representative, and the secretary.

How many people attended that meeting?

Many people attended the meeting: Paul Smith, President; Ken Lewis, Vice President; Stan Heim, Marketing Representative; and the secretary.

How many people attended this meeting?

COLONS

1. Use **colons** to **introduce a list**. Be sure that you have a **complete** sentence before the colon.

   Example:

   Many different classes are being offered: English, Math, Economics, and Writing.

   But not:

   The classes are: English, Math, Economics, and Writing.

2. Use a **colon** to come to a **conclusion** or **generalization.**

   Example:

   He had no other choice: he had to change shifts.

   The wheels were broken, the radiator was smoking, and the fenders were falling off: her car was a piece of junk.

APOSTROPHES

Apostrophes for Contraction

1. Use an **apostrophe** to replace the **removed letter(s):**

We are	=	we're
can not	=	can't
we have eaten	=	we've eaten

Note: He's could mean **he is** or **he has,** and you need to know the context to determine the tense.

Apostrophes for Possession

1. Use an **apostrophe** and an **S** to show possession:

Carol's book
Lorna's pencil
the student's notebook

2. If the **name/noun ends** in an **S,** you have two options:

1) add only the apostrophe:
2) add the apostrophe and the S

Luis' book or Luis's book
Jesus' mother or Jesus's mother
the boss' office or the boss's office

3. If the **noun** is **plural** and you are showing **plural possession**, **add** the **S** to make the countable noun plural then **add** just the **apostrophe**

the teacher's book	=	one teacher and his/her book
the teachers' lounge	=	many teachers use the lounge

APOSTROPHES

4. If the **spelling changes** on the **plural**, **make the change,** then **add** the **apostrophe** after the **S** to show possession:

the company's policy	=	one company
the companies' policy	=	more than one company

5. If the **plural** is **irregular**, use **apostrophe S** to show possession:

the women's room
the children's babysitter

6. If the **plural** and **singular** noun are the **same,** add **apostrophe S**:

the sheep's barn

7. If you are using the possessive for an **indefinite pronoun**, use **'S**:

anyone's	everyone's	someone's
no one's	somebody's	

REMEMBER:

Possessive pronouns that replace the noun **do not** take an apostrophe:

yours	not your's
theirs	not their's
ours	not our's
hers	not her's

BE CAREFUL!

It is	=	it's
its	=	possession

Example: <u>It's</u> raining so hard that the sheep can't find <u>its</u> barn.

OTHER PUNCTUATION MARKS

QUESTION MARKS

The question mark (**?**) follows a direct question.

> Do you have the stock we ordered?

Indirect questions tell the reader about a question, rather than ask it directly. They do not require question marks, but end with periods.

> He asked if they had the stock they ordered.

EXCLAMATION POINTS

The exclamation point (**!**) shows that a word or statement expresses excitement or another strong feeling.

> Look out for that truck!

Be careful not to use the exclamation point too frequently, as it loses its effectiveness.

HYPHENS

Use hyphens (**-**) for adjectives joined as one unit to modify a noun.

> ABC Company uses the most up-to-date equipment.

Use hyphens with the prefixes **ex** and **self**.

> The problem is self-evident.

> I saw my ex-boss at a conference last week.

OTHER PUNCTUATION MARKS

HYPHENS (con't)

Use hyphens for fractions and numbers above 20 and below 100 when they are spelled out.

> A two-thirds majority is needed to pass the motion.
>
> Seventy-three of our employees received long-service awards.

A hyphen is used to divide a word at the end of a line.

> If you ever visit our plant in the United King-
> dom, please come and see me.

DASHES

Dashes (–) are used for emphasis or to set off parenthetical expressions that already contain commas. Do not add a space before or after a dash.

> CPR sometimes–but not always–succeeds in reviving people who have had heart attacks.

PARENTHESES

Parentheses ( ) are used to set off explanatory information from the rest of the sentence.

> The information that follows (worksheets 2, 3 and 4) will help you to understand the rules of punctuation.

OTHER PUNCTUATION MARKS

QUOTATION MARKS

Quotation marks (" ") are needed for direct speech. They enclose the exact words of the speaker or writer.

The supervisor said, "Get to work on time, or your job is on the line!"

Titles of short works, including song titles, short stories, newspaper and magazine articles, book chapters and TV shows, are set off in quotation marks.
Longer works should be underlined, or set in italics.

I read an article in Newsweek about training in the workplace. I think it was called "Training for the Twenty-First Century."

PUNCTUATION EXERCISE

Punctuate the paragraph below.

a new employee is usually assigned the easiest tasks in the office for example she will be expected to learn what tasks are to be performed and who performs them the new employee also learns the companys policies procedures and benefits there are different levels of entry into the company hourly paid salaried and management on her first day the new employee may be asked by the human resources department do you understand the way your contract is set out

PUNCTUATION EXERCISE

Punctuate the memo below.

To: Customer Service Employees

From: Jane Brown, Supervisor

Date: April 1, 1993

Subject: Letters to Customers

I have become concerned about the correspondence that we are sending out to customers copies of employees memos and letters for the months of January February and March reveal some real problems people are making a variety of punctuation errors commas colons and semicolons are used incorrectly spelling mistakes are common and this shouldnt happen with spell checks and messages are not clear concise or to the point

Even though many of you were at Mercer County Community Colleges last training session Im signing you all up for their new set of mini courses called Grammar Brush Up there are four sessions on offer parts of speech punctuation spelling and sentence problems

Im also purchasing the book Proofreading/Editing Proficiency pay particular attention to Chapter 2 Rules of Good Editing and Chapter 4 Punctuation Made Easy

You must all make a concerted effort to be more accurate do you want your mistakes to affect your relationship with your customers

PUNCTUATION EXERCISE

Punctuate the letter below.

April 1, 1993

Mrs Jane Smith
19 Montgomery Road
Richmond N.J.08553

Dear Mrs Smith

Thank you for your letter asking about information on our latest product the Automatic Childrens Room Tidier we are pleased that you have seen our commercials on TV weve also advertized regularly in Good Housekeeping and local newspapers

As you requested were sending you the following an order form to be sent to our plant in Edison New Jersey a sample of out product together with a self explanatory evaluation form and a rebate coupon which could be worth nearly two thirds the cost of the product

We know youll love your Automatic Childrens Room Tidier In the words of our many satisfied customers this is XYZs best product ever

Sincerely

Bill Leavitall
Sales Manager

PUNCTUATION REVIEW

1. During the meeting the manager was shrewd clever and controlled but the order went to the companys competition

2. In spite of the Equal Opportunities Act women still find it difficult to move up in the company let alone become president

3. We thought we would have to work over the Labor Day weekend therefore we were delighted when we finished the order two days before schedule

4. The employees handbook is updated occasionally when there are policy changes when there are holiday changes and at the end of every year.

5. The Christmas bonuses were distributed on December 21 but Bill and Mary two workers in the warehouse complained that they hadnt gotten theirs yet they had a Merry Christmas

6. My new office contains a lot of new furniture a top of the line IBM compatible computer a laser printer a modern streamlined wooden credenza and an environment sensitive halogen lamp

7. The guard at the security house is thorough and reliable he always asks for identification and often requires strangers to show a second form of ID a drivers license a social security card or a recent photo

BUSINESS WRITING II ♦ SESSION 6

OBJECTIVES:

In order to write clear, well constructed letters and memos, at the end of this session, students will be able to do the following:

- correct sentence problems, e.g. dangling and misplaced modifiers, subject and verb agreement and parallel construction
- use proofreading techniques to edit a first draft

TOPICS:

- sentence problems: modifiers, subject & verb agreement, parallel construction
- proofreading

METHODS:

- guided discussion of principles
- worksheets of examples
- application of the above to own first drafts

EVALUATION:

- comparison of first to second drafts
- successful completion of worksheets

MATERIALS:

- Students' first drafts for revision
- Subject-Verb Agreement
- Modifiers
- Parallel Construction

TEACHER TIPS ◆ SESSION 6

When looking for examples of writing problems, if possible use examples from existing company letters or reports. If these are not available, write your own examples using company specific settings.

The purpose of this last session is for students to edit and rewrite their letter that they have been working on throughout the course. These will be submitted for final assessment

SUBJECT – VERB AGREEMENT

Subject – verb agreement problems stem from having one of them **plural** and the other **singular,** so they don't match.

INCORRECT	Some people *has* a lot of money.
CORRECT	Some people *have* a lot of money.
INCORRECT	A person should do *their* own work.
CORRECT	A person should do *his or her* own work.
INCORRECT	The supervisors *was* disappointed with the outcome.
CORRECT	The supervisors *were* disappointed with the outcome.

Sometimes, agreement errors are not so obvious.

INCORRECT	The board of directors control the company. so *they* have the final decision about policy changes.
CORRECT	The board of directors controls the company, so *it* has the final decision about policy changes.
INCORRECT	An analysis of the problems *make* me conclude that we have a lot of work to do.
CORRECT	An analysis of the problems *makes* me conclude that we have a lot of work to do.

Some **compound subjects** name a unit that calls for a **singular** verb.

INCORRECT	Bacon and eggs *are* my favorite breakfast.
CORRECT	Bacon and eggs *is* my favorite breakfast.

but

INCORRECT	Her loyalty and her ability *makes* her a valuable employee.
CORRECT	Her loyalty and her ability *make* her a valuable employee.

SUBJECT – VERB AGREEMENT

With **either...or,** and **neither...nor**, when **both** elements are **singular**, the **verb** is **singular.** When **one** subject is **singular** and the **other plural**, the **verb** agrees with the **nearer subject**.

INCORRECT	Neither the early nor the late appointment *are* good for me.
CORRECT	Neither the early nor the late appointment *is* good for me.
INCORRECT	Neither the ideas nor the style *are* satisfactory.
CORRECT	Neither the ideas nor the style *is* satisfactory.
INCORRECT	Neither the style nor the ideas *is* satisfactory.
CORRECT	Neither the style nor the ideas *are* satisfactory.

The **verb** must agree with the **subject** in number, even when there are modifiers of a different number.
(Modifiers are words or groups of words that describe, limit or make more exact the meaning of other words)

INCORRECT	The final report, including the graphs and reference sections *are* being published this week.
CORRECT	The final report, including the graphs and reference sections, *is* being published this week.

SUBJECT – VERB AGREEMENT

Make the verbs in the following sentences agree with their subjects.

1. The consortium of shareholders (*seem, seems*) pleased with our profit margins over the last quarter.

2. Each of the customers (*is, are*) anxious to see our new project.

3. A new consignment of computers *(is, are)* expected to arrive today.

4. All the members of the department (*joins, join*) me in wishing you a speedy recovery.

5. The Human Resources Manager, as well as all her department, (*has, have*) decided to implement the new procedure.

6. Either the secretaries or Bill Smith (*answer, answers*) the phones during the lunch hour.

7. There (*has, have)* been times when some people were unable to go to class.

8. The purpose of these classes *(is, are*) to help improve our skills in writing.

9. At the Delaware River, the Washington Sand Aquifer is not well defined and only an upper layer of peat, sand and silt *(has/have)* been identified.

10. We concluded that groundwater in tidally influenced areas *(is/are)* more susceptible to actual surface water quality than to upgradient groundwater quality.

DANGLING MODIFIERS

Modifiers are words or phrases that give more information about the subject, verb or object in a clause. A modifier **dangles** when the word it modifies is not actually in the sentence.

1. Confirming our conversation, the meeting will be next Tuesday morning.

2. At the age of five, I began teaching my daughter to read.

3. Signs advertising the new exhibition are seen, driving towards Philadelphia.

4. By statistically showing significant differences between the two groups of data, the sources are ambiguous.

5. Unless completely rewired, nobody should handle the faulty equipment.

MISPLACED MODIFIERS

A **misplaced modifier** seems to modify another part of the sentence than the writer intended.

1. We need to have a meeting to discuss the new recommendations that will be put into practice by March 9.

2. He bought the unit from the warehouse that was made of lightweight aluminum.

3. Everyone, except assemblers and secretaries with less than two years experience, is eligible for the training.

4. I grabbed the fire extinguisher and put out the blaze running down the aisle.

5. Sitting on the top shelf, he saw the missing package of instructions.

6. Attached is a breakdown of computer assignments outlining the personnel who should be slated for replacement next year.

PARALLEL CONSTRUCTION

To be grammatically parallel, nouns should align with nouns, verbs with verbs and phrases with phrases.

INCORRECT: *Working* with others is sometimes harder than *to work* by yourself.
CORRECT: *Working* with others is sometimes harder than *working* by yourself.

INCORRECT: My supervisor is a woman of *understanding, compassion* and *who knows how to be fair.*
CORRECT: My supervisor is a woman of *understanding, compassion* and *fairness.*

INCORRECT: The training room was *painted, had new carpeting put in* and *cleaned* for the new classes.
CORRECT: The training room was *painted, carpeted* and *cleaned* for the new classes.

INCORRECT: *To record, to write up* and *distributing* minutes are all tasks of the team secretary.
CORRECT: *To record, to write up* and *to distribute* minutes are all tasks of the team secretary.
OR: *Recording, writing* and *distributing* minutes are all tasks of the team secretary.

also

INCORRECT: It has and continues to *be* important.
CORRECT: It has *been* and continues to *be* important.

INCORRECT: You can teach a dog *to listen* but not *talk.*
CORRECT: You can teach a dog *to listen* but not *to talk.*

EXERCISES USING PARALLEL CONSTRUCTION

Revise the following sentences so that they are grammatically parallel.

1. Making mistakes costs money, wastes time and customers take their business elsewhere.

2. Over the holidays, our department likes to go out for lunch, sending cards and baking cookies.

3. It was a very long meeting but very productive.

4. Our company is profitable, competitive and it is a stimulating place to work in.

5. You can program a computer to give forecasts but not think for itself.

6. Informing the receptionist when you arrive in the morning will save time getting your calls to you and where you have numerous calls back.